





ARE YOU **SURE** YOU'LL BE ALRIGHT THERE HUNT?

I'LL SURVIVE.

DON'T BOTHER OFFERING HELP. HE DOESN'T WANT ANYONE TOUCHING HIM. MAN'S **REAL** EDGY.

ISN'T THAT **NORMAL** FOR SOMEONE THAT SHOWS UP FROM TOPSIDE? WITH THE TOPSIDERS, MONSTERS, BANDITS, AND WHO **KNOWS** WHAT ELSE, WOULDN'T YOU BE EDGY TOO?

I'M **NEVER** EDGY JESS.

IT'S NOT THAT HARD TO BE THAT WAY WHEN YOU LIVE IN A PERFECTLY SAFE PLACE AND SMOKE LIKE A DANG **CHIMNEY** MOST OF THE DAY.

IT JUST KEEPS ME CHILL, JESS. I **HAVE** TO. IT'S UNHEALTHY TO HAVE SO MUCH **STRESS** BUBBLING UP INSIDE. IT'S JUST LIKE A POISON, MAKES YOU **CRAZY** Y'KNOW?

**YOU'RE** CRAZY IF YOU THINK THAT SMOKING ALL THAT NASTY STUFF IS GOOD FOR YOU.

IT'S **NATURAL**!

NATURAL MY FOOT.

HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP BACK THERE MR-...OH.

MR. CARDIGE! YOU'RE NOT  
LOOKING SO PERKY THERE.

YOUR KNEES  
ARE SHAKING  
UP A STORM!

I JUST NEED A  
**MOMENT** HERE.

IT'S BEEN A **LONG** DAMNED DAY AND NO SMALL  
AMOUNT OF WALKING FIT INTO ALL THE **INSANITY**.

UGH, MY LEGS FEEL  
LIKE THEY'RE GOING  
TO FALL OFF...

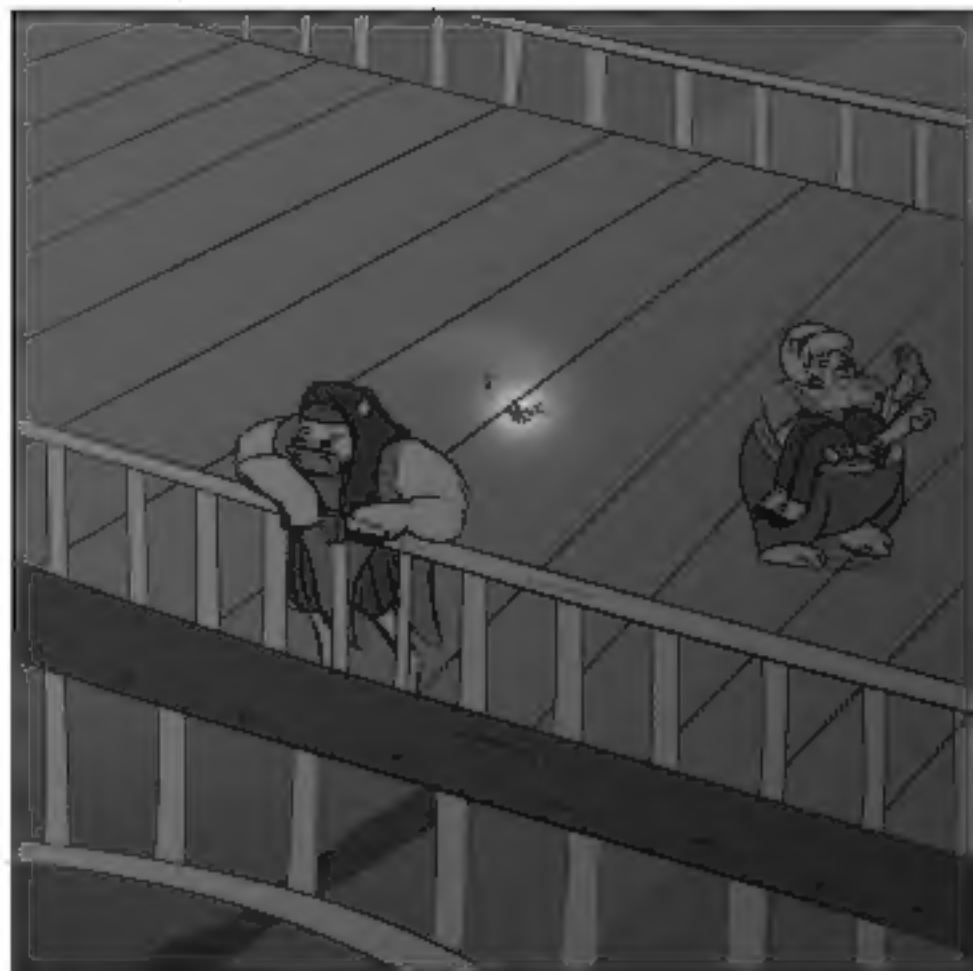
I KNOW ZIGGY SAID YOU DON'T LIKE HELP, BUT  
**HECK** TO IT! UP YOU GO

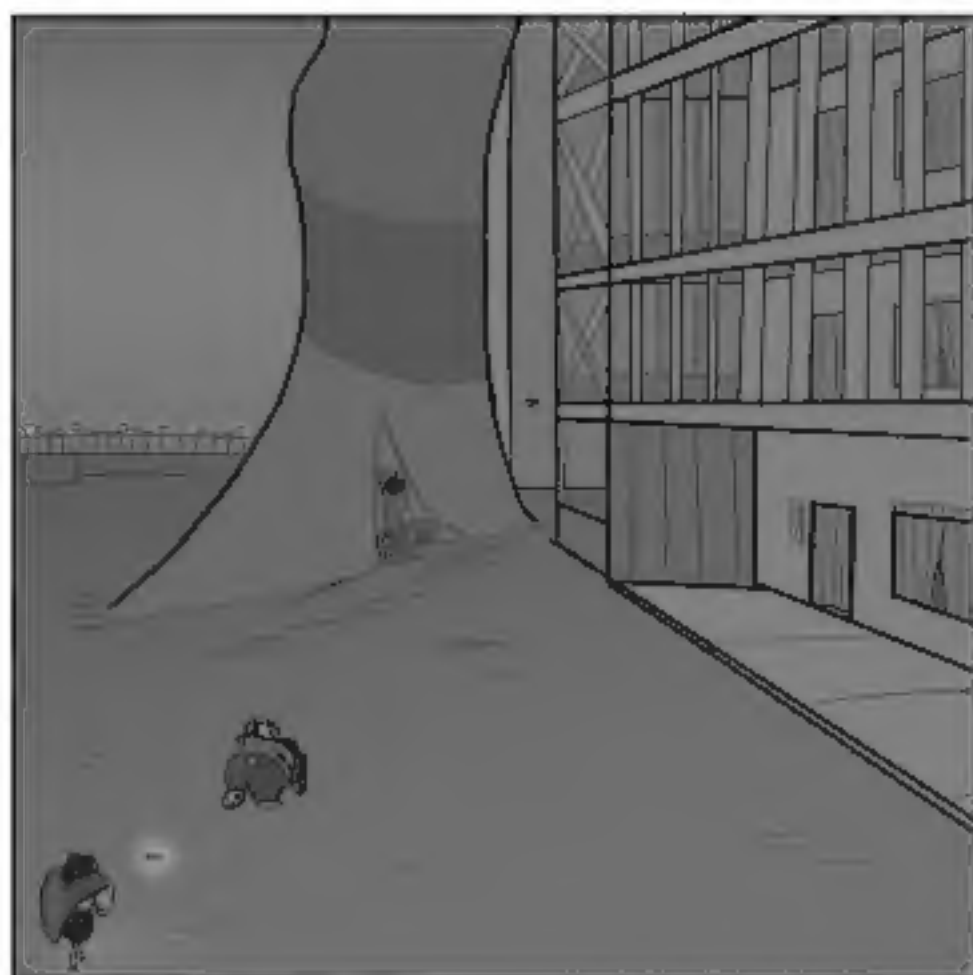
WH- **HEY!!**

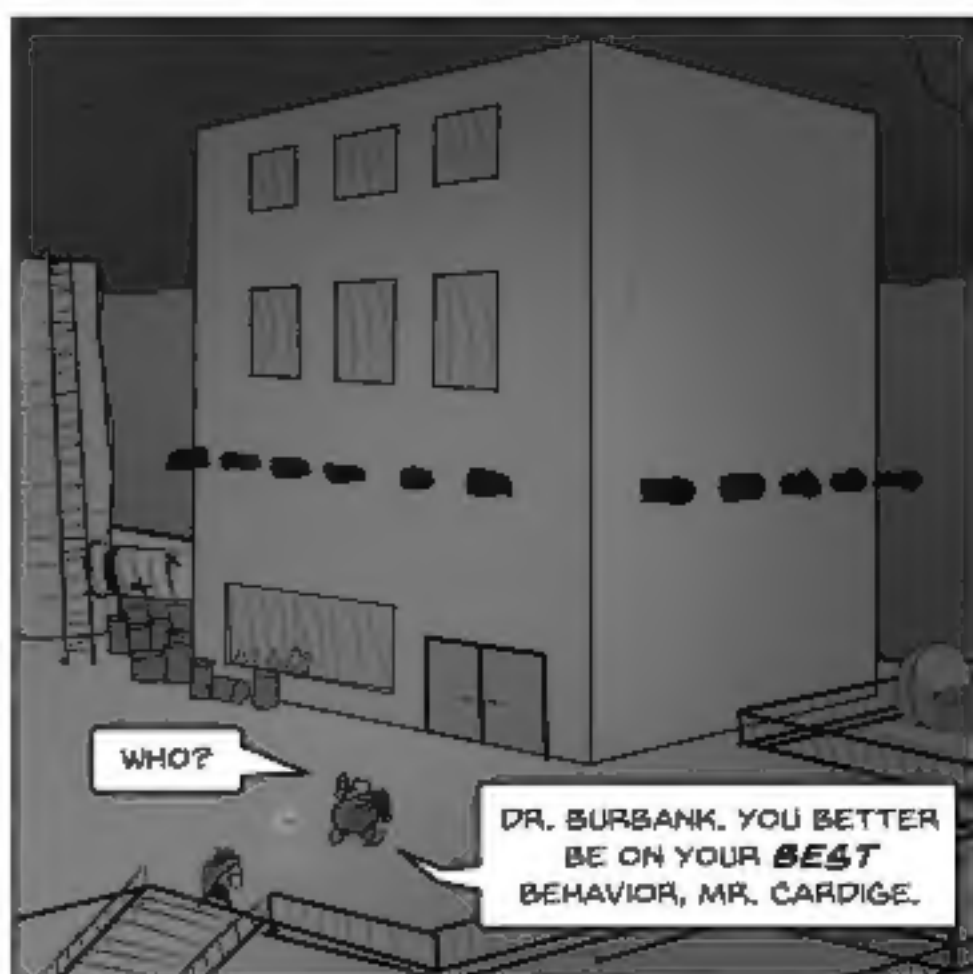
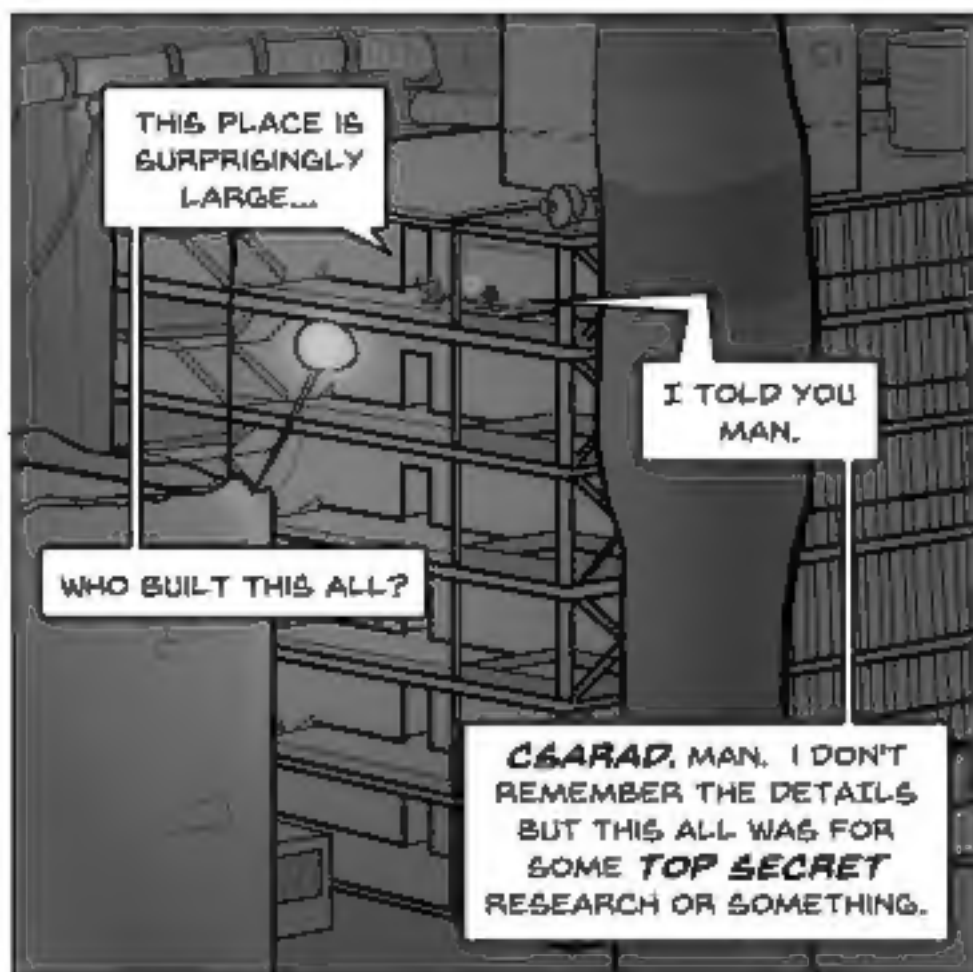
PUT ME DOWN THIS **INSTANT!**







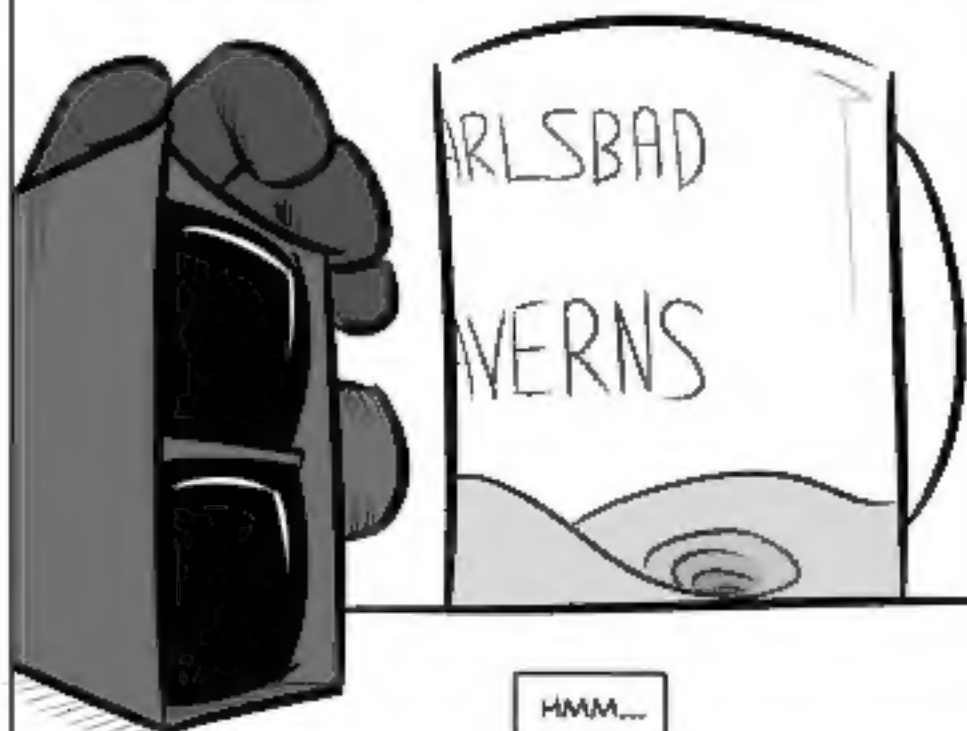








...SO WE WERE HOPING YOU COULD WEIGH IN ON  
MR. CARDIGE HERE, DR. BURBANK.



HMM...

FOR THE SAFETY OF  
EVERYONE HERE,  
I'LL NEED TO ASK  
YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.

LET'S START WITH  
THE **MOST**  
IMPORTANT ISSUE.



AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE, EXACTLY?

THIS **ZERO GUN**.

IT'S **RARE** THAT  
SOMEONE COULD  
EVER GET THEIR  
HANDS ON ONE.



I-I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO **FATHOM** THE AMOUNT  
OF DANGER SOMEONE HAS TO BE IN TO  
EVEN **SEE** ONE OF THESE IN PERSON TOPSIDE.

CAN YOU PLEASE ELABORATE  
ON **HOW** YOU CAME TO  
POSSESS THIS WEAPON?

WELL...



WOULD YOU LIKE  
THE **WHOLE** STORY OR AN  
ABRIDGED VERSION?

IT ALL STARTED WHEN MY PARTNER AND I CAME ACROSS ONE OF THOSE... 'TOPSIDER' VEHICLES IN THE DESERT

PARTNER?

BERNARD BUNSEN. WE'VE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER SINCE THE BOMBS FELL.

THAT'S A **LONG** TIME, MR. CARDIGE. YOU TWO MUST BE CLOSE...AND YET, HE WASN'T WITH YOU WHEN ZIGGY FOUND YOU?

YES... WE... WERE **SEPERATED** BECAUSE OF THIS LITTLE ADVENTURE.

BUT THAT'S FOR **LATER**. THE VEHICLE WE FOUND WAS TIPPED ON ITS SIDE, THERE WERE BURN MARKS ON THE GROUND.

I DECIDED TO INVESTIGATE INSIDE THE VEHICLE WHILE BERNARD EXAMINED THE OUTSIDE.

YOU WALKED **INTO** ONE OF THOSE DEATH TRAPS?!

IT SEEMED AS IF IT WAS ABANDONED, AND THOSE VEHICLES **COULD** HAVE SUPPLIES.

"SEEMED".

YES. WE **WEREN'T** ALONE AFTER ALL.

A TOPSIDER I ASSUME?

YES AND NO. THEY DON'T **TYPICALLY** HAVE ROWS OF **SHARP TEETH**.

IT SPRUNG FROM HIDING AND GRABBED ME FROM BEHIND IT **TRIED** TO BITE MY DAMN HEAD OFF

JEZIA.

**THANKFULLY** BERNARD JUMPED INTO ACTION BEFORE IT COULD. HE PRIED ITS MOUTH OPEN AND IN THE STRUGGLE I MANAGED TO SHOOT IT IN THE HEAD, KILLED IT IMMEDIATELY.

HOW COULD THEY MUTATE LIKE THAT, MAN? I THOUGHT THOSE SUITS CAN'T BE TORN.

NORMALLY THEY CAN'T BUT... TOPSIDERS **CAN** REMOVE THEIR OWN SUITS.

HOW DID YOU **KNOW** IT WAS A TOPSIDER?

THE MONSTER WAS WEARING A TOPSIDER SUIT ON ITS BODY, WHY **ELSE** WOULD IT WEAR ONE?

SO THEY TOOK IT OFF KNOWING THEY'D MUTATE? YOU CAN'T **DO** THAT AWAKE, THAT'S **CRAZY!**

CRAZY BUT UNSURPRISING.

TOPSIDERS **ARE** LEGITIMATELY INSANE, JESS. YOU CAN THANK THE **SICKNESS** FOR THAT.







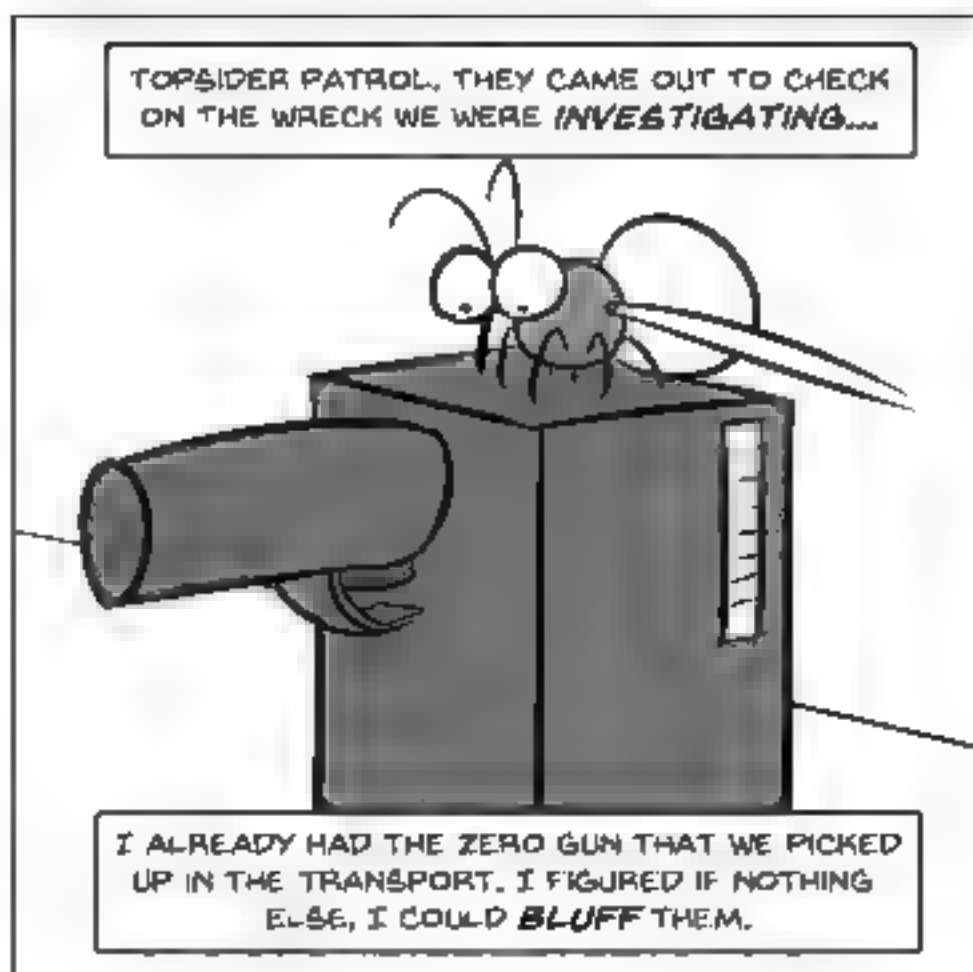












WE DECIDED TO SPLIT UP. IT'D MAKE IT MORE  
LIKELY **ONE** OF US WOULD LIVE...



WE AGREED TO TRY MEETING AT CARLSBAD  
CAVERNS IF WE BOTH SURVIVED.

BERNARD WENT WEST AND I WENT EAST.



EVEN WITH A SCOUTER THEY WOULD HAVE TO PICK  
**ONE** OF US TO FOLLOW IF THEY DETECTED US.

THEY DIDN'T FOLLOW ME.



I THINK THEY PICKED BERNARD UP FIRST  
AND WENT TOWARDS **HIM**.

SO, I RAN.



WHEN I FINALLY  
REACHED THE  
VISITOR'S  
CENTER I WAS  
**EXHAUSTED**.

BUT I TRIED STAYING AWAKE, WAITING FOR  
BERNARD TO SHOW UP NEXT...



GREAT. I'LL JUST GRAB MY PROPERTY AND-

ABOUT *THAT*...

I'M SORRY BUT I'LL BE KEEPING THIS ZERO GUN  
OF YOURS TO STUDY MORE *CLOSELY*.

I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND, MR. CARDIGE, THAT A  
GUN LIKE THIS IS NEARLY *IMPOSSIBLE* TO GET.

IF WE CAN *REPLICATE* THEM THEN OUR  
TOPSIDE EXCURSIONISTS WILL BE FAR BETTER  
OFF WHEN THEY LEAVE HERE ON THE R JOBS.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT *DOCTOR* I PAID A HIGH  
PRICE TO HAVE THAT IN THE FIRST PLACE!

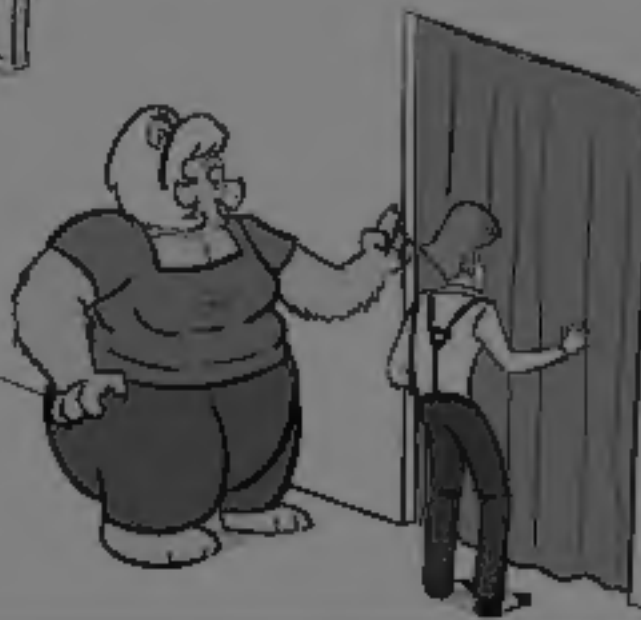
AND NUEVA OODHAM THANKS YOU FOR THAT, AG  
DO THE *COUNTLESS* LIVES THIS'LL SAVE!







YOU STILL THINK HE *ISN'T* ON THE LEVEL, DOC?



I *DOUBT* HIS STORY BUT THERE'S NOT ENOUGH PROOF FOR ME TO CAST JUDGMENT NOW.

BUT...LIKE, WHY DO YOU THINK HE COULD BE LYING?



HIS CLOTHES...

THEY'RE VIRTUALLY *NEW*, ZIGGY.



THE MAN'S ALSO PALER THAN A BELUGA WHALE, ALMOST AS IF HE'S NEVER BEEN IN THE SUN.

TELL ME, DOES THAT SEEM LIKE THE SORT OF TOPSIDE WANDERER YOU'D *EXPECT* TO SEE?



WAIT A MINUTE DOC, ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS  
GUY COULD BE A BONA-FIED *TOPSIDER*?

HIM?

HAHAHAHAHA!

HOO...!

FUNNY JOKE, DOC. *TOPSIDER*, HERE IN THE N.O.!

DOC?

DOC!

HEY! *DOC!*

YOU'RE JOKING, *RIGHT?*!